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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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VICTORY FARM VOLUNTEERS

January 2, 1947

For your information

TO ALL VFV SUPERVISORS:

Subject: News Letter



THE DRAWING

This Donald Duck, drawn by a Pittsburgh, Pa., VFV girl, has such a bright face that we couldn't resist using him to symbolize our view of the new year which is just around the corner. D. W. Atkinson, Pennsylvania's farm labor supervisor, sent us this sketch. It seems that Paul Smith, of his staff, wrested it from the artist, who's spent three summers in a Connecticut tobacco camp along with scores of other girls recruited in Pennsylvania.

DO YOU WEAR AN EMBLEM LIKE THESE?
JOIN THE
VICTORY FARM VOLUNTEERS

CONFERENCES COMING UP!

places for all of us to get a new perspective of VFV and farm labor for 1947. When you do get your programs for the meetings, however, you will note that no special group meetings are provided, as in past years.

The three regional farm labor conferences in Salt Lake City, Chicago, and Atlantic City seem to me among the most important

If any of you folks are interested in getting together to discuss VFV matters--and I know that some of you will be--we certainly can arrange to meet informally at some convenient time. There are a few things on my mind that I think we might well take up--selection and rating of live-ins, a name which some day will be needed to replace VFV, and ways and means of improving day-hauls. You may want to discuss others. Anyway, I'll be looking forward to seeing you at your regional meeting.

FIGURES DON'T LIE

some of your recent reports.

Let's look at this business of selection and rating right now. We've some good background material on the subject from

Pennsylvania, Vermont, and New York have been doing some checking up on their 1946 successful and unsuccessful placements, mostly for live-ins. Their figures are interesting. Jack Weaver says that 87 percent of his Westchester boy live-ins were successful, 75 percent of them New York City boys. He figures that 86 percent of the New York girl campers were successful. In Pennsylvania, the area VEV supervisor's report on individual ratings shows that 79 percent of the Philadelphia area VEV's were successful. And in Vermont, Mrs. Buttrick's figures show that failures amounted to 19 percent of Vermont's total VEV placements, while 30 percent were above average.

These figures aren't complete pictures of each program. We merely picked out some of the interesting ones. A lot of factors figure in our failures and successes. And selection is certainly one of them. Atkinson in Pennsylvania is particularly interested in the importance of selecting the right youngsters for farm work. He points out, for instance, that one Philadelphia office sent 40 VEV's to Vermont and only 2 of them--5 percent--rated failure. He thinks that with a similar good job of selection in other parts of his State, percentages of successful placements will go up.

Some of you will echo these further remarks from Atkinson--"One of our problems of selection in large cities is that we have to depend upon city-reared teachers for their recommendations and upon city-reared physicians for the physical examinations....Doctors sometimes pass physically unfit boys thinking that a summer vacation in the country will be beneficial."

As we all know, however, selection is only one of the factors in securing a high percentage of good records. "Sometimes," as Atkinson asserts all too truthfully, "the farmer should be rated as unsuccessful."

WOMEN STILL IN THE PICTURE

from a Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania, report set us to thinking:

County farm labor assistants have their ear to the ground and often have an apt way of putting things. These words

"After having so much trouble trying to convert our farmers to the use of women during 1945, we are now surprised to find many of them requesting women in preference to men for harvesting operations. Our underlines.

We all know that women did a surprisingly fine emergency job during the war. But where women worked for purely patriotic reasons, it set established an employment pattern that is likely to last. Under more normal circumstances than actual wartime, we find in this instance women who apparently made a good record for themselves in farm work, and farmers who must have found that women fit ideally into certain labor situations.

SEVEN PERCENT MORE

Yes, women farm workers are still in the picture. They're in it for the Nation as a whole even more than last year.

Figures show that seasonal placements of women under the EFL program are 7 percent over last year's. And that must be compared with youth placements which are 79 percent of 1945 on our records.

Some of the possible reasons for more women on farms: more migrant families this year; women let out of war plants; husbands with less remunerative jobs than during the war.

IS SIX HOURS ENOUGH?

We asked John Downing to tell us more about that 6-hour day adopted for day-hauls in the Portland, Maine, area

this summer. And here are a few points in his explanation which may interest you:

"Children will generally work well until they get tired; when that point is reached discipline becomes a problem and production drops....Experience has shown that an increase in work hours over six does not result in a proportional increase in production....Among other advantages of this work day, supervisors are better satisfied and easier to recruit."

GETTING THE ANSWERS

Leo M. McGrann, area farm labor supervisor in Connecticut, got into something interesting when he set out

to evaluate the use of supervisors in tobacco day-hauls this past summer. To the 39 school teachers employed for these supervisors jobs, he sent out questionnaires. And he asked some pertinent questions.

He got some pertinent answers--28 of them. Twenty-three of the 28 supervisors said they liked their work. Twenty said they found working conditions "good." Three found them "poor." Twenty said they received adequate instructions from growers to do their job well. The answers also included specific data on work hours.

Supervisors offered some suggestions, too--ones which impressed McGrann as well worth trying another year. They recommended uniform rates of pay, incentive pay, blackballing "drifters," rest periods for boys and girls, washing facilities, etc. And they commented on swearing and vulgar language used by straw bosses.

R. K. Pierson, Idaho's farm labor

MORE ABOUT IDAHO POTATOES

supervisor, lets us in on some additional facts about the Idaho potato harvest.

We mentioned Idaho's use of school youngsters in my last letter.

Newspaper stories when I was in the West, along with reports from local farm labor folks in Idaho, indicated that potato growers weren't getting all the labor they should have from the closing of Idaho schools. But Pierson notes that placement figures were misleading--since students often avoided Extension placements in order to select the best-paying fields.

He notes, too, that earnings of youth exceeded 1945, indicating that more students worked. In Pocatello, for instance, 1,300 junior and high school students worked an average of nearly 10 days and averaged about \$40 in earnings.

FARM BUREAU SUGGESTION

Especially interesting is one more item which comes from Idaho. The State Farm Bureau, so Pierson informs us, is sponsoring a State-wide meeting of grower representatives, school officials, and the Extension Service to formulate a uniform plan of using students in the 1947 harvest. The Farm Bureau is anxious that students not be absent from classes more than 10 days.

GOOD YEAR IN OREGON

Must have been a good year in Oregon. From a Marion County monthly report: "On the whole, Marion County during this season had the best group of platoon leaders that it has had at any time, which in turn resulted in giving to the farmers satisfactory service."

And from Multnomah County's report: "The season has proved a profitable one for the workers. Most children made well over the two hundred mark. All of the leaders who finished the season with us, want to come back again next year and with the orders now on hand, it looks like we can use them and many more".

WAGES, AGAIN

In Vermont, Mrs. Buttrick, has been concerned about wages. Farmers, she felt, were not in all cases "coming across" with the amount of wages they should pay. After compiling this year's figures, however, she was surprised to learn that the average weekly pay was \$9.50, which was \$2.50 more than the minimum suggested by Extension. All Vermont's VFV's made total wages of \$39,268 this summer.

Jack Weaver totaled up the wages earned by his farm cadets. Boy live-ins made a total of \$97,672. Girl campers earned \$19,247, but they paid \$14,720 board out of this. Boys in the program outnumbered the girls 3 to 1.

SOMETHING NEW IN PUBLICATIONS

In the mill right now is a new VFV publication. Its title: Farm Work For City Youth. Its purpose: for distribution to educators, youth agencies, and others concerned with youth education and welfare. Its message: that city youth need work experience, that the farm can provide it for those interested, and that farm work has abundant educational values. And its appearance: a "slick" 28-page pictorial job, size 9 by 11.

The publication is chock full of pictures--and we did our best to represent as many parts of the country as possible, considering the pictures we had on hand and their suitability. IF ALL GOES WELL in the Government Printing Office, it should be off the press about March 1.

HERE AND THERE

Ohio operated its University High School girls' camp again last summer, and Gry Dewdy says farmers were pleased and want the girls back next year....In Colorado this fall, 165 college students and

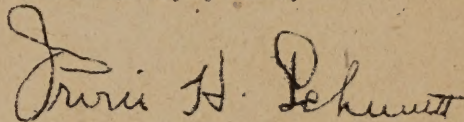
some high school youth worked in three counties in sugar beets....Doris Shimkus is working on a survey of day-hauls in Michigan. We'll be interested in that and day-haul information rounded up in any other State....In September, 40 percent of all Georgia's placements were youth. It was cotton harvesttime.... Negro school children in Georgia distributed handbills designed to get nonfarm workers back to the fields after an early November storm....South Dakota was depending on school children this fall in its sugar beet harvest.

VFV IN PRINT - 1947

We appreciate all your help in filling out questionnaires about 1947 VFF publications. But we've still some States to hear from.

As we've indicated before, we'll probably revise the recruiting posters, "Youth Earns and Learns", and "Youth Can Help." These, WE HOPE, will be out earlier this year than before.

Sincerely yours,



Irvin H. Schmitt, Chief
Victory Farm Volunteers Division
Extension Farm Labor Program

(Copy to State Supervisors,
editors, directors)

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